

Thursday's Child

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Thursday's Child

by [Bakerstreetmuse](#)

Summary

Brought together by a book of old Danish poetry and previous misfortune, Will and Lucas find more than they expect, dare to hope for, and believe they even deserve in one another. Updates Wednesdays.

Notes

A commission from someone very generous who has chosen to remain anonymous. Thank you very much. I hope y'allz enjoy.

Chapter 1

Will Graham dreads grading. He especially does not feel like it today. He walks toward the towering stack of student papers on his desk with a gallows swagger, headache already building behind his eyes. He massages his temples with a groan, weighing options for procrastination. He looks at every individual piece of furniture in his small office. A tall brassy lamp that looks on the verge of snapping, his poor overloaded desk, the two wooded chairs, probably older than him, that no one has used since the office became his. His own chair is obscured by the mountain of student papers. With a grand total of four visual distractions his gaze returns to the stack of written papers on his desk, nearly reaching the drop ceiling.

He is pulled from his dismal perusal of the mountain of papers on his desk by a sharp knock on his door. He smells familiar perfume, tasteful and floral, delicate. He's not sure what the perfume is, but he knows who wears it. He takes his glasses from his front shirt pocket and places them strategically on the bridge of his nose. He turns to face his colleague, Dr. Alana Bloom. Her face is nearly bisected by the frames of his glasses. Her kind smile gleams below the divider and Will swallows.

"Hello, how are you, Will?" She asks. Will looks vaguely past her right shoulder and gesticulates toward the monstrous number of papers on his desk.

"Looks like fun." She says dryly. Will shakes his head and crosses his arms.

"I assigned them a 25 pages final, profiling a killer of their choice who's never been caught." He begins and Alana leans forward, politely interested. "I wish I assigned them my laundry instead."

She laughs and Will's grin flashes briefly, awkwardly stretched and semi-pained. He doesn't know how to do this, and it shows "You know, that is what TA's are for."

"Laundry? Light dusting? Ass-kissing? I prefer to wade in my filth alone, Alana."

"Methinks the lady doth protest..."

"You'd be protesting too if you set yourself up to read hundreds of pages about how the Chesapeake Ripper's mother probably didn't hug him enough, that read like a cobbled together Wikipedia page; half-baked points of view, both maddening and reductive."

"Reductive, Will?"

Will retreats behind his mountain of papers. He does not invite Alana to take a seat.

"He's lucky to have you preserving his reputation."

"Or hers." Will counters and Alana moves to the side of the small room. It is enough to give him space, but enough to keep him in her sight. "But you know that I know he's a man."

Alana nods tightly. They remain in silence. She remains calm and cordial. She is the eye of the storm in the whirlwind of Will's cluttered office. Will prickles in her presence, his hands visibly twitching and his jaw tightening.

"Well, I just wanted to stop by to tell you that I might have found someone to translate that book for you."

Will is pulled back into the conversation and out of his anxieties. He focuses on a spot on the wall nearly level with Alana's long curls.

"Who?"

"His name is Lucas Holm. He teaches Scandinavian languages for the Language Department at Ellory College."

"Ellory College?"

"It's lost in the middle of the woods in Virginia, so Hannibal says."

"Hannibal?"

"He's an old mentor of mine. He invited me over for dinner last week and I mentioned your book of poems to him. He speaks several languages, so I hoped he might be able to translate it. He pointed me toward Lucas Holm."

"How does he know him?"

"He didn't say, but he did give me his business card. Do you want it?"

Alana extends a card, plain and white. Will regards it too long, stretching the casual exchange into something weighted and strange. He takes it and looks at it, the rims of his glasses cutting it neatly in half.

"Lucas Holm, Translator. World Language Adjunct, Ellory College." He reads before slipping the card into the front pocket of his pants. "I've never heard of Ellory College."

"There's almost more colleges than kids out there." Alana says and Will nods his head in agreement. He sticks his hands into his pockets and feels the sharp paper slice his skin. He grimaces.

"Are you OK, Will?" She asks. It sounds kind but it feels like an invasion. Will grits his teeth. He wants her to go. He wants her to stay.

"Fine." He almost manages not to hiss.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

Ellory College is small, secluded, and surrounded by woods. It appears charming and quaint, its campus a series of well-kept brick buildings and a small stone church which has been repurposed as an event space. In the summer it becomes almost deserted. The few students and faculty remaining mill about the sun-dappled dirt paths between buildings like ghosts.

In their midst is one man clearly overdressed for the season, a long coat over a sweater, and long pants. He is tall and dwarfed by layers, dishwater colored hair falling into a pair of thin-rimmed glasses, which are unfashionable and age him from a distance. He is handsome, though he shrinks into himself. He walks uncertainly, as though he is unfamiliar with this place he has worked in for months.

Three of his colleagues pass by, from the astrobiology department. They laugh together, engaged in conversation.

“Lucas!” They call and he nods, small and stiff, head nearly disappearing into his coat. He continues on walking until he stops before the small old church. Its small rose window reflects yellow and red on its steps in the sunlight.

One of his students, a bright girl named Ji-u, waits for him on its steps, basking in the sun like a happy cat. Her long blue hair hangs down to her calves. She wears a large paint-stained t-shirt like a dress. Lucas looks comical as he approaches her, greeting the idyllic summer in layers and layers of winter wear.

“Lucas!” She waves, bright and cheerful as he stops a foot below the stairs.

“Hello, Ji-u.” He answers, so quietly that the space between them almost swallows up his words. “How was Romania?”

“Amazing!” She is bright and young, one of his favorites. She takes to language like a duck to water, and is free with her thoughts and feelings. She can articulate her every emotion and whim with astounding clarity in seven languages at least. He envies her. “It feels good to be back though.”

“I bet.” He says, and looks past Ji-u to see a few students riding their bikes in the distance. He returns his attention to her. “I must admit, I was surprised to get your email. I thought you

were taking a semester off.”

“I am, technically, but I saw something really interesting while looking through the fall semester course offerings.” Ji-u looks down at him, her throat clicks and her hands fold. She is preparing to ask for a favor. Her blue hair is ruffled by the wind. Some gets in her mouth and she violently piles it on top of her head with a sigh.

“And what’s that?”

“Talking Dirty: The Function of Profanity In World Language!”

“I did not want to call it that.” Lucas speaks softly as always, masking his frustration while telegraphing his discomfort.

“But you’re teaching it!”

“With Charles Rendine.” The way Lucas says the man’s name says it all. Ji-u laughs.

“I was wondering if, even though I’m not technically enrolled, I could sit in?”

“Do you want to do the homework too?”

“If it interests me.” Ji-u says plainly and with a little kick, displacing the dirt on the stairs. Lucas knows she is entirely serious.

“Have you asked Charles Rendine?”

At this Ji-u’s smile dissipates entirely, almost as if it had never been there at all. Lucas looks away.

“He makes me uncomfortable.” She says quietly, reaching to play with one of the loose strands of bright blue hair which frames her face.

Lucas says nothing. A light summer breeze sweeps through the chasm between them. “I don’t really go out of my way to hang out with him.”

“I understand.” Lucas says. “And if you want to take the class, I won’t stop you.”

“Do you think Rendine’ll care?”

Lucas honestly has no idea. He finds it difficult to know what anyone will think or feel about anything. He is about to tell Ji-u this when he feels his phone buzz in his pocket. It trills sharply and he winces.

“You should really change your ringtone, Lucas.” She says as he takes out his phone. It’s just an e-mail. Ji-u checks hers as well and groans.

“Anyway, my ride’s waiting, but it’s definitely OK if I sit in on that class?”

“It’s OK with me.” He says with a small, cautious smile.

“Thank you so much! I guess I’ll see you at the end of August!” Ji-u looks as if she might reach out to hug him, and despite the staircase between them making it wholly impractical, Lucas takes another step back in case she might. He watches as she trots down the stairs and away.

Lucas sits on the stairs of the church, unzips his thick coat only to his sternum, and takes out his phone again to check his email.

“Will Graham?” He reads aloud. “Why does that sound familiar?”

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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Something vague and sharp around the edges spills across the darkness, slick as oil. Will watches his reflection pool and disperse within it. He is suspended, motionless, numb, detached entirely from himself. He watches as the lines which roughly correspond to the shape of his face begin to ripple with the force of strange vibrations, growing louder and louder and louder and--

Will snaps awake with a pained gasp, his tired blue eyes stare into the middle distance. His chest heaves, lungs clawing for breath. He has sweated through his nightshirt. Around his neck and beneath his arms sweat pools, dripping onto the bed. Piece by piece he becomes aware of his phone, vibrating with alarming strength against his nightstand. It near slams against it. He looks at the clock beside it. It reads 5:30 am.

“Two hours.” Will groans. Two hours. That’s all the sleep he has managed. Then again, it is Sunday morning. And summer. Will tends to lose his bearings in the summer entirely, without a class schedule to keep him in a strict rhythm. Time tends to slip away entirely. He often finds himself doing research during a 7 pm lunch, or revising his work during a 9 am dinner. He fumbles blindly for his phone, and sees that it’s only an e-mail. Addy, a recently acquired stray, a grey speckled mutt who has quickly gone from starved to plump under his care, plops herself on the mattress, seeking affection.

“At least it’s not a phone call. I’d have to kill whoever it was.” He says to Addy as he lazily scratches behind one of her ears, which is missing a chunk. She drools and Will grimaces, but does nothing to stop it from landing on his thigh. He considers putting his phone down and forgetting about it until he’s had more sleep, but he knows that falling back asleep is very unlikely.

“Lucas Holm?” He groans as he opens it. “Who?”

“Dear Will Graham,” He begins to read aloud to Addy. The pitter patter of dog feet follows. Most of his pack had been asleep surrounding his bed, but the few who had roamed to other parts of the house return at the sound of their master’s voice. He mumbles through the rest of the email, which professional, and terribly standard, until he comes to a particularly troubling sentence toward the end of the message.

“I prefer to discuss my clients’ projects by phone.” Will grimaces as he reads to Addy. Addy sniffs the air. “It’s a tactic to weed out people who are wasting his time.” Addy has nothing to say on the subject. “I look forward to hearing from you, Lucas Holm.”

Will rolls onto his side. His phone is still cradled in his hand. “Should I be an asshole and call him back right now?” He asks Addy. Addy flops down, curling up against his calves. Will feels another dog, solid and warm, curl up against his back. He yawns and his eyes close of their own volition. His breathing begins to slow. His last thought before sleep takes him is that Lucas Holm keeps the hours of a senior citizen, if he is up handling his correspondences so early.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

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His heart pounds in his ears and beats violently in his throat. His mind is alight with blissful static. Lucas pants, his aches turning to sublime relief as he runs and runs and runs. He gets up early in the morning, to ensure that he is truly alone. When he has classes he runs for only half an hour a day, but the summer allows him time to indulge. from 4 am to 5 am he ran, madly and without purpose, until his body burned.

He had woken to find the walls of his small apartment looming and unkind. Anger burned hot and low in his stomach. He had barely taken time to tie his shoes before bolting. In the early morning the empty streets of Bly, Virginia appear even more depressing than they do during the day. Caught in a constant state between being rebuilt and crumbling, the dark does it no favors. He ran past abandoned houses, houses that look abandoned but aren't, Bly's Main Street which consists of about a dozen stores, a Walmart, and out of town into the forest's well worn dirt paths.

He'd run out into nothing and back, the tittering of forest animals turning back to the sounds of the highway, which was infrequently used beside Bly. As he passes the Walmart again he catches sight of Biscuit, the town stray. He's grey and lean and sweet, an outdoor dog who the entire town of Bly has taken responsibility for. He's very clean for a stray. Lucas has seen a few people bathing him on their lawns since spring came around.

"Good morning, Biscuit." Says Lucas as the dog runs beside him. Lucas knows that he's probably hungry and keeps his pace as he runs into the Walmart parking lot. Biscuit keeps up beside him. Lucas comes to a stop at the doors, and Biscuit stops beside him.

"Stay." Lucas intones and Biscuit plops down with a whine and begins to scratch himself. Lucas sighs fondly as he enters the Walmart.

Beneath the vast towers of objects, lit in plasticine hospital-like lights, Lucas feels vaguely as if he is about to be dissected. He feels naked and exposed in only sweat pants and a long-sleeved shirt. He pushes his glasses up on his nose and powers through the feeling to the refrigerated section. Even after several years, he still finds Walmart alien and strange. The sheer number of things available in one place seems wholly excessive to him.

Lucas finds a package of hotdogs in the refrigerated section and grabs it. He jogs up to the registers, past Candy Davis, a middle aged kleptomaniac failing at stealthily prying a NYC

brand eyeshadow out of its casing, and a man he recognizes but whose name he cannot recall, wandering the home office section muttering to himself as he scratches his arms. He stops at the only open register. An exhausted looking woman with unevenly drawn on eyebrows and hair hardened by cheap hairspray rings him up with a language-like grumble. She is there in the early morning almost every time Lucas is.

“Have a good day, Rae.” He says and she grumbles back at him, biting on her thumb nail as a chip of fire engine red polish falls onto her chin.

Lucas jogs out of the Walmart, to where Biscuit awaits his treats. The dog perks up when he exits. His tail wags as he looks at the package of hotdogs Lucas holds. He follows close behind as Lucas jogs to the edge of the Walmart parking lot.

“Will you do a trick for them?” Asks Lucas. Biscuit continues to eye the treats in his hands.

“Sit.” Tries Lucas. Biscuit only has eyes for the hotdogs. His tail wags.

“Paw.” Tries Lucas. He holds out his other hand. Biscuit sniffs it, searching it blindly for treats.

With a fond sigh Lucas bites a hole in the hotdog package, finagles it wider with his fingers, and slides out a raw hot dog for Biscuit, who yelps excitedly. When Lucas drops it on the ground Biscuit takes to it immediately. Lucas drops another before continuing on his way.

Main Street is still deserted when he passes it. The abandoned and habited houses sigh in sleep. His own apartment building, announced as Harlow Manor by a half unhinged wooden sign, stands tall in the dark. At five floors, its one of the tallest structures in Bly. Through several windows he can see the flashing lights of several TV's. Lucas remembers when he was one of Bly's many insomniacs.

He hadn't brought his keys, because the doors are never locked. He walks in and down the long water stained hallway to his own apartment, 15c. It's empty and impersonal inside. The white walls glare flagrantly in the strips of light which squeeze through the blinds. He debates between showering before or after he answers his emails, and decides to get them out of the way first.

Emailing several clients and students turns into him doing preliminary research to answer a question, which leads him on another path of query, and dusk turns to day around him as he sits reading, oblivious to the world around him. The hotdogs he had bought sit forgotten beside him.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

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Will looks at Lucas's business card and he looks at the phone. He looks at the cup of coffee in his hands and he looks at his dogs. Some are still eating. Those that have finished have fled. It's a beautiful summer morning, and he has left the door open for them. He listens to them frolicking happily in the field surrounding his home with a smile. That smile fades at the sound of whining from the edge of the living room.

"Addy..." He admonishes without looking. She's sweet, but greedy. She's always trying to steal the other dogs' food. Addy trots over to him, slowly and clearly ashamed. He keeps her by him as the other dogs finish their breakfast in peace. He looks again between the card and his phone. He has been thinking about it for hours. He'd rolled out of bed a little before ten and ten had almost turned to noon, with him still considering his options.

Will has wandered his kitchen blindly looking for something to eat, only to decide against it every time. He picks up the phone. He puts it down. He picks up Lucas Holm's business card. He puts it down. He thinks of a meaningless chore to do, ambles around without doing it, and sits back down.

He wanders out onto his porch to watch his dogs play, phone and business card in one hand and cup of coffee in the other. The soft summer morning breeze ruffles his hair. He breathes it in with a stretch, tiny blue sleep shorts riding down his hips as he cracks his back with a groan. He unselfconsciously scratches his left butt cheek, and briefly considers getting entirely naked on his porch, but settles for removing his shirt. He drops it on the ground and settles with his legs dangling over the edge of his porch, so his feet rest in the grass. His coffee sits beside him.

"To hell with it." Will Graham sighs as he dials Lucas Holm's number.

Lucas is buried in 'Det elskende menneske, person og etikk' for reference on something he's translating when the sound of his phone ringing pierces his scholarly haze. He picks it up reflexively, almost unaware of what he's doing.

"Hallo?" Lucas intones, quiet, heavily accented, and obviously otherwise engaged. Will silently remarks at the breathiness of his voice. He feels his peculiar accent wash through him and frowns. He glares out into the field where his dogs play.

“Is this Lucas Holm?” He asks. It sounds brusque and semi-pained. Prickly already, Will unconsciously reflects Lucas’s displeasure at being interrupted.

“Yes, I apologize for the rude greeting. I began researching something...five hours ago? Have five hours really passed? And it appears I became a little lost. To be honest, I do not remember picking up my phone at all.”

His self-effacing quiet charm soothes Will like cool water. “You’re doing better than me. Once my phone rang while I was in the middle of editing an article for the fifth time and I threw it against the damn wall.” He finds himself saying, much to his own horror. Lucas’s small but genuine snort of amusement feels like pure indulgence. “It’s, ah, Will Graham. I emailed you about the translation of the book of poems?”

“Of course. How are you today, Mr. Graham?”

Will frowns. He finds himself listlessly scratching his stomach, fingers playing in the fine hairs beneath his navel, and stops himself. “Ah, just Will please.”

“Ok.”

“And I’m...good?” Will wants to slap himself. He doesn’t need a complete stranger to be so harrowingly aware of his own inability to even pretend at basic stability.

“Just call me Lucas then, as well.”

“Ok.” Will says. “Lucas.” The name feels strange on his tongue. He says it to fill the silence. It seems to expand and contract around and within him. Will starts to fidget. And then he yawns, high and catlike. He wants to hang up.

“You sound tired.” Lucas observes, quietly and politely, but Will can feel his amusement.

“I only just woke up. Sounds like you’ve been up for awhile if you’re already five hours deep into research.”

“Do you want to have your coffee and call me back?” Asks Lucas and while Will thinks that Lucas is politely trying to get rid of him, he feels the man’s genuine concern for his comfort.

“Have it right here.” He says and takes a long drink. Lucas listens intently to the sound of his throat clicking around the hot coffee. He only suddenly becomes aware that he’s been sitting in the clothes from his run all morning, and smells and looks dreadful. His spiral into needless self-consciousness is interrupted by Will, who even after already determining that Lucas usually gets up early, knows better than to let his knowledge bleed into the conversation.

“Out of curiosity, just how early did you get up this morning, Lucas?”

“At about 4.”

“Damn! I wish I could do that. I would sleep all day if I could.”

Will's voice is frank and rough from sleep. His tone and chosen words are uncompromising in their stark honesty. Lucas finds himself smiling and trying to imagine the man the voice belongs to. He wants to get to the point of the call, but he knows that the sooner he does so the sooner it will end. Lucas finds himself compelled to drag it out as long as possible. Will's sleep-roughened voice tickles his ear.

"I am, I believe it is called, an early bird. I like to run before sunrise if I can."

Will imagines the long lean lines of the body of a runner and swallows.

"I only run when I'm being chased."

"Are you chased often in your line of work?"

"Kind of. Used to be a cop. Though I suppose I did more of the chasing than anything else."

"A policeman? With a gun and everything?"

"Yeah. I could lie and tell you about how dangerous it was, but it was mostly goddamn paperwork."

"It is ok. I am not too impressed by danger."

Will wonders if this is flirtation or not. It certainly feels that way. He is half-tempted to return to the familiar ground of business, and half-tempted to push this as far as it will go. Several paths stretch before him, each feeling more flirtatious and dangerous than the next. His throat clicks nervously around nothing.

"What are you impressed by, Lucas?" He asks and feels his heart climb his throat and his stomach drop through to his feet. There is no mistaking his tone. He fights the urge to run.

Lucas feels something hot and pleasurable burn in his cheeks. He bites his lip and sets it free. He is at a genuine loss. He searches the blank walls of his nearly empty apartment for answers.

"Conversation." Lucas answers honestly at last, after the excruciating silence stretches thin. It is guileless and plain, spoken softly. "Good conversation."

Will thinks of the natural flow of their exchange, the domesticity, the chemistry. He thinks of the subtle warmth he can feel in the words of the soft spoken man. He feels the need to withdraw and charge forward both. He comprises with himself, appeasing the parts of his nature both starved for human connection and terrified by the prospect.

"So," He begins. "I suppose we should talk about my book."

"Of course." Lucas replies. He doesn't sound disappointed, but Will can feel that he is. He desperately wants to fix it. "I actually have a few questions for you. There is something strange about your book."

"Oh, yeah?"

“Yes. So you said the book is called ‘Æblet’ and the author Ejvind Raske? And you think it’s a book of poetry because of how the text is arranged?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, Will, according to multiple databases and several colleagues this book and author do not exist.”

“Really?”

“Yes. Can you look inside it for the copyright or ISBN number?”

“Sure, hold on a second.” Will lays the phone on the porch and goes inside to fetch the book. It’s a small green hardcover book with gold lettering and signs of wear and age. He finds it under a pile of reproductions of old crime scene photographs. He turns them over needlessly before returning to his porch with the book. He puts the phone to his ear and begins to flip through the front and back of the book.

“I think there’s a dedication in the front, but nothing else.”

“Very interesting, Will. How did you get this?”

“I picked it up at a yard sale a few weeks ago. It was fifty cents.”

“Can I ask why, if you don’t speak Danish?”

Will wants things from this man he cannot explain or name. He knows that the chance of attaining these things are almost non-existent if he says that he could feel the author when he held it, as if he had personally bound and printed it, feel something raw within it, taste it like blood in his mouth. His myriad mirror neurons firing in tandem, reflecting knowledge gained and lost.

“I am fascinated by old books.” He says instead. It feels flat to him. Will wonders if Lucas can tell. Lucas can, but he does not push.

“If you would like, we can work out a time for you to bring the book to my office. I would like to look at it before determining a price.” Lucas says and Will sighs. He knows this call will end soon, and has already begun to anticipate the loss of Lucas’s voice and presence.

“Sure, give me a second to check my schedule.”

“Of course. I will as well.”

Will takes a moment to look at the sky, at his porch, at his white feet which are dirty from twining listlessly in the grass. His pack has grown tired of playing and flopped happily in the grass together, warm and content beneath the summer sun. His unscheduled summer with almost nothing but open time swings open before him like a gaping maw.

Lucas has very few obligations himself. He has spent the last few summers on his own, working. He has few friends in Virginia or anywhere else, and spends most of his time alone

or at Ellory College, teaching. He knows that he has nothing scheduled for the rest of May, aside from two deadlines at the end of the month. He places his phone to his ear.

“Will?” He says at the exact moment Will says his name.

The pair share a short, awkward laugh.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

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“Shit.” Will Graham mutters to himself as he exasperatedly tears through his the homogenous and hyper-casual contents of his incredibly unimpressive closet. He has a few hours until he needs to leave to bring Lucas his book. He simultaneously agonizes over what to wear, and hates himself for behaving like desperate freshman going on a first date. He almost pulls his dirty clothes from the day before out of his hamper out of spite, but when he goes to do it finds nothing but matching pairs of tiny blue boxers and sweat-stained white shirts.

“Has it been that fucking long since I left the house?” He asks no one in particular. Addy is asleep in the corner and does not respond. Her chubby belly expands and contracts with breath, raising and lowering Buster’s head in a steady rhythm, who is using her as a pillow.

Meanwhile Lucas begins the hour and a half commute to his own office, wrapped in layers of winter wear despite the summer weather. His second-hand four door toyota has a CD player in it, which still had a burned copy of Pink Floyd’s Dark Side Of The Moon in it when he bought it. He picks the CD out of his glovebox, rough chicken scratch letters crammed onto the front, and slides it in before starting off down the road.

His ride to campus is uneventful. He lets the CD play again and again, becoming white noise as he prepares himself for social interaction with a man he was reasonably sure had been flirting with him. Lucas is not sure what to make of it all, or what to do with it. It has been years since he had even been on a date. He tries to focus on what he knows, that this man wants a book translated by him, and that that is probably all he wants, but every time he does, he hears Will’s voice in his head, gently brusque and suggestive:

What are you impressed by, Lucas?

Lucas is nervous. He feels his stomach tighten into a fist as he turns onto Cat’s Back Road. He sighs and his sigh turns into a hum as Money begins to play through his speakers.

Will regards his abundance of plaid shirts with disdain for picking one and throwing it on. He grabs his keys and a piece of untoasted bread before stomping out of his house and across his lawn to his car, parked in the garage.

Will is in the middle of unlocking his car when it hits him that he’s forgotten his book.

“Damn!” He groans. He tosses his piece of bread on top of the car and heads back into his house to hunt for ‘Æblet’.

When he reemerges, book in hand, he forgets the piece of untoasted bread he had left on the top of his car. It slides off, landing in the grass for the birds, as he pulls onto the road.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

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Lucas passes Ji-u on the way to his office. Her long blue hair is tied in a long intricate braid which flops over her shoulder. Her usual paint stained t-shirt hangs loose and her feet are encased in worn black leather sandals.

“Lucas! Hi!” She says brightly. He feels nervous and sick.

“H-hello Ji-u.” He says, and her smile falters. She hears how flat and insincere it is. He unlocks his office, only to find that he had never locked it in the first place, and only managed to re-lock it. He sighs as he works it open.

“Are you ok, Lucas?” She asks as she slides into his office before him and sits in one of the chairs in front of his desk.

“I...” He begins to say as he sits at his desk, and unzips his winter coat only enough so that he can comfortably sit. He thinks to lie, and he does. “Yes.” He says. He can tell that only politeness keeps her from snorting.

“I’m actually here because I’m on my way to have lunch with Professor Caddiccipo. Want to join us?” She asks. Lucas often finds it strange that this precocious girl is better friends with his colleagues than he is. Della Caddiccipo had had an office down the hall from him for nearly his entire time at Ellory, and yet he had, had maybe half a dozen conversations with her over the course of his employment.

“I would, but I have an appointment.” Lucas says softly. Ji-u looks at him and he is overcome by the notion that she knows who and how and why and how absurdly he feels about the whole situation, as if his crush is telegraphed in his skin.

“Another student?” She asks and Lucas feels swallowed by a sudden fear, an accusation that he knows she is not meaning to deliver.

“A client I’m translating something for.” He replies and it sounds almost pained. He listlessly shuffles his feet beneath his desk.

“She must be pretty cute, huh?”

Lucas feels the urge to crack the floor open and stick his head inside. “Don’t you have a lunch to get to, Ji-u?” He asks and her smile is smug and toothy and delighted.

“What’s her name?” She asks and Lucas wants to be angry and push her away, but a part of him sings at the rare opportunity to share this experience with someone, which is all too new for him after so long in solitude.

“William.” He says softly and Ji-u’s eyes widen, not disapproving, but surprised. “Will.”

“Huh,” She says with a contemplative little breath. “All you liberal arts guys are the same.”

Something that had been tensed into a knot in Lucas’s stomach untwists, a weight lifted off him in an instant, and he begins to laugh, soft and relieved. Ji-u responds to his laughter, her genuine guffaws eclipsing his restrained half-laugh-half-breaths in the small room.

Their laughter is interrupted by three small knocks on the door. Lucas looks at the time blinking on his phone. It’s exactly noon and Will is exactly on time.

“C-come in.” Lucas says softly. He waits a beat. Nothing happens. “Come in!” He tries again, only slightly louder. The door knob begins to turn.

Lucas begins to sweat.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

When confronted with the sight of Will Graham for the first time, Lucas hardly knows what to do with himself. The man is small, delicate, and beautiful somehow even despite his rough-looking stubble, unkempt hair, and and outdoorsy attire. His blue eyes look wild and fearful, dangerously intelligent. He holds the book in one slender hand, poking out from between a slightly too-large flannel. Lucas can't believe the man who had been teasing him on the phone looks like this.

In Will's way, he sees the damage done to Lucas written across him obviously and plainly. He is badly hurt, been cruelly displaced, and suffered losses which have led him to isolate himself. He is quiet and shy and unsure, but within him burns an almost seductive anger. Will can feel it licking at his fingertips, heat and fire and light.

Will clears his throat, lets the over-layered exterior of a large man trying to make himself appear small overtake the rage-hot interior tucked away, and notices his charmingly professorial grey streaked hair, unusual mouth, and the large hands poking out of his winter coat.

"Well, thank you so much for your help, Professor Holm!" Ji-u says with a smile and excuses her self as Will and Lucas continue to regard each other. Will catches a flash of the molten darkness of the other man's shyly averted eyes before forgoing eye contact entirely.

"Hello, Will." Lucas says quietly. "Please, take a seat."

Will does. He gets a closer look at the other man's face, sharply boned and oddly beautiful, and quickly looks away. His lashes fan over his cheeks and Lucas watches, fascinated as an old hunger begins to coil low in his belly.

"How are you today, Will?" He asks and suddenly notices that the younger man has dog hair clinging to his shoulder and sticking out of the the front pocket of his shirt. Will catches him noticing and he looks away, ashamed at being caught staring.

"I have eight dogs." Will says and looks to immediately regret saying so. Lucas wants to take his hand desperately. He smiles a small smile.

"That is a lot of dogs." He says instead, fondly. "How did you get so many?"

“I live in the middle of nowhere. People tend to just dump their dogs in the road sometimes; If they get old, if they get sick, if they look weird, if they’re just not wanted anymore, and they all find me somehow.”

“They are all strays?”

“Were all strays.” Will corrects pointedly, oddly proud of his odd rag-tag family of sorts.

“That’s very kind of you, Will.” Says Lucas and Will feels something warm and pleasant curl in his chest, he finds nothing insincere in the statement. He feels the urge to bashfully deflect the praise and can’t find the words.

“Do you have any dogs?” He asks and while Lucas outwardly shows no signs of distress, Will feels a hot barb of anger flare from him.

“Not now.” Says Lucas, evenly. “My building does not allow them.”

They sit in silence together, not strained but pregnant with things unspoken. They have seen each other, and they want each other, but neither is sure of the other or how exactly to proceed. Will wonders how deep the depths of Lucas’s rage and how strictly he must manage himself, to give so little away. He wonders at the hard lines of his runner’s body buried beneath layers of winter wear.

“Have you brought the book?” Asks Lucas and Will nods, placing it on the table. Lucas takes it and feels the warmth left from Will’s hands on the cover. He opens it slowly and takes his time examining it, from the dedication to the very last page with the genuine enjoyment of a true bibliophile. Will can see him in his own living room in Wolf Trap, reading by the firelight. Flames reflect low and flicker in his glasses as he sprawls beside the fireplace.

Will fights the urge to stab himself in the leg. Or in the imagination. He feels juvenile and giddy and eminently frustrated.

“Oh, Will, you have something truly wonderful here.” Lucas says at last, and Will is grateful to no longer be left to his saccharine imaginings.

“I do?”

“I would say that this book is at least fifty years old. I think the author Ejvind Raske, self-published a book of love poems for his wife, Merete. This might be the only one of these in the world.”

Will wonders at the ridiculousness of him possessing something so wholly unique and sentimental and can’t help but shake his head.

“You said you purchased this at a yard sale, Will?”

“Yeah. In the town over from me they have them on weekends all the time during the summer and fall. There was a big Mayday festival on Main Street a few weeks ago. I go every year.”

Lucas imagines Will, gleaming bright in a humdrum crowd of country folk,

“You know, had someone told me a few years ago that one of a kind books of Danish poetry can be found in rural Virginia I would not have believed it.”

“Yeah, well, the south is an unusual place.” Will says, entirely self-deprecating and wry.

“With many unusual treasures.” It is earnest and corny and delightful and Lucas realizes that it could be construed as a flirtation with a flash of horror. He pales considerably. Will, simultaneously disbelieving and flushing with treacherous delight despite his better judgement, grinds his heel against the floor and swallows, unwilling to look Lucas in the eye.

“So, what’s the damages?” Will asks, at a loss of how to respond.

“Damages?” Lucas asks and Will realizes that he may have to let colloquialisms go if he wants whatever this non-thing is to continue.

“How much will the translation cost me, Lucas?”

Lucas smiles sadly, unsure but also certain that the overture he had accidentally made had just been glossed over and gently rejected. He straightens his glasses and prepares himself to talk business.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

Nearly three days have passed.

As Will does laundry he thinks of Lucas. As he works toward finishing grading his final papers, he thinks of alternate careers to teaching. He also imagines what Lucas might be doing. He finds himself knowing nothing and too much at once. His head swims.

As Will feeds his dogs, as he drinks coffee, as he hold his phone in his hands and puts it down again with a sigh, as he showers, as in his juvenile fugue he bites down on a pen too hard and it explodes in his mouth, up until he begins to choke on ink, he thinks of Lucas.

He thinks of his large hands and sharp cheekbones and dark eyes. In still moments he imagines what his body might look like beneath his unseasonable puffy winter coat. He putters around his kitchen, one hand absently meandering toward his cock as he feels it start to stir with interest.

A pile of precariously stacked ungraded student papers fall to the floor in his living room with a cacophonous crash.

“This is fucking ridiculous.” He mutters as he runs upstairs to his bedroom, where his clothes are still kept. He generally prefers to grade at home, but with his focus so divided, he decides that working at his office might yield better results. Will haphazardly pulls on his usual worn button up, grey blazer, and ill-fitting khakis. He stuffs his bag with papers, and walks out the door.

He is halfway to his car when he realizes he forgot to put shoes and socks on.

“Goddammit!” Will wiggles his toes angrily in the grass before darting back into the house to put on his shoes.

While Lucas is almost always delighted to take on new projects, and can lose himself in his work for hours, he has found his concentration lacking and his thoughts inevitably returning to one Will Graham.

Lucas has made two meals he hasn't eaten and opened four word documents he has barely managed to begin to translate. The Danish, The Norwegian, The English, it all swims and

turns to indistinguishable mush before his eyes. He takes off his glasses and massages his temples with a groan.

Before he has thought about it his phone is in his hand. He picks it up, thinks of calling Will, imagines what reasonable excuse he could even claim to have, and puts his phone back down.

Lucas considers going for a run, but looks out into the brightness of the day and decides against it. There will be too many people about for his tastes. He would not feel comfortable so undressed in the uncompromising light of day.

He returns to staring blankly at his computer screen.

When Will Graham arrives at Quantico it's with a heavy heart and heavier bag. He nearly limps across the parking lot to the building, messenger bag slamming against his leg. It catches on the door, sending unmarked and half graded papers flying every which way. Will grabs all of them but one, and continues on his way. The paper rests on the ground, rustling but staying stationary in the small breeze. It eventually picks up momentum and skids to rest beside a gleaming Bentley.

Will is long gone when Dr Hannibal Lecter, fresh from a guest lecture on the heart of crime being social exclusion, steps out into the parking lot to find the escaped assignment. He picks it up.

‘Cerise Godet, Professor William Graham.....’ Hannibal reads aloud before his eyes skip directly to the paper’s title ‘The Chesapeake Ripper: Origins’. He notes with amusement the title ringed angrily in red with the words ‘He is most likely not one of the X-Men’ scrawled beside it. Hannibal picks it up and pockets it before opening his car door.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

“Knock, knock!”

It’s night time. Will has no idea how or when that happened. But the darkness explains why he’s been having trouble reading the papers.

“Knock, knock!”

Will looks up to see Alana standing in the doorway, carrying a paper bag that looks about to burst.

“The UFO food truck was in town today!” She says, gently waving the bag. Will has no idea what’s in there, but it smells incredible. An almost painful jolt of hunger hits him and he remembers the piece of untoasted bread he’d put on top of his car that morning.

“Maybe there is a god, after all.” He says and gestures for Alana to sit in one of the nearly unused wooden chairs in front of his desk. He joins her in the adjacent one with a groan. Will knows that she does this out of worry, more than anything else, but she always manages to catch him at a time when he’s too famished to care.

“I figured we’d try the Voodoo Jerk Chicken Sliders this time.” She says as she unwraps a pair of sliders near bursting with chicken and onions and pineapple and sauce. She places one in Will’s hands before starting on her own. Will sees the sweet potato medallions still in the bag and grabs one. He pops it into his mouth with another groan.

“This truck is the reason why I keep accepting their invitations to lecture.” Alana says with a small moan and Will nods, too focused on the flavors and textures, the feeling of warmth pervading him from a substantial meal, to do much else.

“How’s your grading going, Will?” She asks and can’t help but laugh as his pained expression is stretched by his mouthful of food.

“That good?”

“I have found it almost impossible to focus on any of it. Every paper is like every other paper is like the next. They blend together like a palette of the dullest colors imaginable.”

“Something else on your mind?” She asks and it sounds innocent enough, but then again Alana has perfected a fresh-faced innocence, in which are set a pair of shrewd eyes. Will knows that if he tells her she will know, and if he doesn’t she will know everything aside from specifics, which he will tell her eventually, regardless. He sighs.

“I brought that book to the translator you recommended.”

“Good! I’m glad. You seemed very invested in it.”

Will ducks his head in embarrassment, remembering calling Alana in the middle of the night to talk to her about impressions he had received about this book he could not read, only to hang up on the third ring. He had carried it with him for over a week, flipping through it in quiet moments as though he could read it.

“What did he say?”

“Uh, well. It’s not what I thought it was about.”

Alana eats a few sweet potato medallions and waits for him to continue of his own volition. Of course, Will does.

“It’s an old book of danish love poems a man self-published for his wife. It’s one of a kind and wholly worthless.”

“Doesn’t sound worthless to me. I think it’s sweet.”

Will says nothing. He wonders what Lucas might sound like reading it, not reading it to him exactly, just aloud maybe in a room where he just happened to be.

“What did you think the book was about?”

“Have you ever met Lucas?”

“Who?”

“The, uh, translator your old mentor recommended.”

“No, why?” Asks Alana, but Will’s bewildered expression of pained embarrassment says it all.

“He’s pretty cute, huh?” She says with a glint in her eyes, allowing the tasteful irony to do her work for her. Faced with even friendly ribbing Will half-chokes on a piece of sweet potato medallion. He nearly gags on the water he drinks to soothe his throat.

“Looks like he made quite an impression on you.”

Will grimaces.

“Have you talked to him since you brought him the book?”

“No.”

“Maybe you should.”

Will wants to. He truly and desperately does. But he also doesn't want to talk about it and can't imagine himself actually going through with it.

“What would I say to him?”

“I've been told 'hello' usually works well in situations like these.”

“Hilarious.”

Alana finishes up her slider. Her fingers are sticky with sauce and she wipes at them daintily with a napkin. “I would say there's a fair chance he wants to talk to you too.”

Will says nothing, waiting for her to fill the silence.

“Hannibal described him as the most reserved man he has ever met.”

Will smiles. It sits awkwardly on his face. “He wears winter coats in the dead of summer. He hardly talks. He speaks so softly, I feel as if he's speaking to me from underwater, inhaling saltwater and exhaling fog. He barely seems to breathe.”

Alana says nothing, watching with interest as Will's face softens, his voice infused with warmth.

“Reserved is definitely one word for it.” He continues. “I would describe it as permanently on guard.”

“Your wary mermaid.” Alana says in all seriousness and Will frowns. “Looks like its time to put all those hours of fishing to use.”

“I dislike that comparison.”

“Call him.” Says Alana, it is firm but kind. Will sighs.

“I'll think about it.”

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

Lucas awakes to the ringing of his phone, sharp and crisp and excruciatingly loud. He had fallen asleep hunched over his keyboard, and his neck throbs painfully as he rises lifts his head and reaches toward the phone. He looks blearily at his computer screen and realizes it's barely eight in the evening with a frown.

"You're getting old Lucas." He says to himself as he picks up his phone and looks at the caller ID. It reads Will Graham. He nearly drops the phone before scolding himself, answering, and placing it against his ear.

"Hello, Will." He says. The words scrape out from between his teeth, gruff and sleep-roughened. He winces. Will feels sparks at the base of his spine, the gravelly baritone resonating there.

"Hey, Lucas." Will's voice cracks. He winces. "I apologize if I've caught you at an inconvenient time."

"Oh no, not at all." Says Lucas, elated and terrified and embarrassed by the brusqueness of his greeting. "I fell asleep at my computer while working on something. Your call startled me."

"Your neck must be killing you." Says Will. Lucas breathes a short laugh, as quietly as he always speaks.

"It is. I think I need a new one."

"Try eBay. If you throw in an extra limb or two they might even get it to you in forty-eight hours." Will nearly slaps himself across the face for saying something so asinine and grim to someone he does not want to think he's crazy. He knows that he probably should have offered a massage, or possibly not? He figures offering an aching man a massage sends a better message than suggesting he hack off his own limbs in payment for a new neck from eBay. He wishes he could pay someone to flirt with Lucas for him.

"Even after so many years in this country I learn something new everyday."

"What was the most shocking?" Asks Will. He feels a little better about the conversation. Lucas's voice washes over him, soft and warm.

“I think seeing all the guns on the shelf at Wal-Mart, perhaps.” Lucas breathes, comfortable and natural, Will listens and lets it wash over him. “Aisle five, children’s shoes, aisle ten, apocalyptic weaponry. It sends a certain message.”

“It does.” Will agrees. He imagines opening a discussion about the innate nature of human violence. He imagines Lucas, sweet he as presents himself, withdrawing instantly. “America is a troubled country.” He says instead.

“How polite of you.” Lucas says and it’s soft, but tinged around the faintest edges with sarcasm.

“What am I usually, not?” Will damn well knows the answer. He’s a sailor with a sailor’s mouth. He unsettles people at best and pisses them off at worst. He wonders what the hell he’s doing with Lucas. With any of this.

“You’re more of the honest kind I think, Will.” Says Lucas. Will wishes it were true.

“How long have you been in the US, Lucas?” Will asks, genuinely curious and equally interested in removing himself from the focus of the conversation.

“Just about six years now. It was a good change. An interesting one. I like it here. I actually lived in New York City first. Most of my clients are still from New York City.”

“I can’t ever imagine living in New York City. I’ve been a good southern boy too long.”

“A good southern boy, Will?”

Will can feel what Lucas wants him to say, suddenly, clarity striking him like lightning. He knows what Lucas wants him to be, and he thinks he can become it. As soon as it occurs to him he doubts it instantly, tries to shut it away, this easy carefree flirting is alien to Will. He doesn’t know how it has come about, but he wants it avariciously. He sinks his claws into the moment, figuring what the hell.

“Sweet as chess pie.” He says and feels ridiculous, foolish, and on the verge of escaping not only this conversation but technology all together for a simpler hermetic existence in a cave where men can’t torture him.

“Chess pie? I have never had it.”

“Maybe it’s time we fix that.” Will almost can’t believe himself. He cracks his jaw, feeling it tense and twitch. He keeps waiting for Lucas to recoil, to hang up, to drop the phone, to deflect. He can’t want what Will does, a world in which that exists in unfathomable.

“What would you suggest, Will?”

Will knows what this is. He knows what comes next. He finds himself momentarily paralyzed. His dogs sense his distress and pile around him, seeking to comfort and ease. He centers himself in their astute care, stroking their fur and feeling grounded by the weight of their collective presence.

“I know a great place to get real southern cooking. Come with me on Friday.”

Will senses Lucas’s hesitance through the phone like a slap across the face. He nearly buckles beneath it.

“Ok.” Lucas nearly whispers. “I would like that.”

For the first time in many years Will feels the urge to dance, to jump, to slam his fist on something without give and feel the reverberations crack their way up his arm. He feels like celebrating. It is a decisive victory in a cruel and capricious universe.

“It’s called Joetta’s. It’s in Culpepper. It’s a bit of a hike but worth it.”

“I don’t mind a drive. I live over an hour from where I teach.”

“When’s good for you?” Asks Will. He half expects Lucas to back out at any moment. If he did Will wouldn’t blame him.

“How about seven?” Lucas sounds just as unsure as Will feels.

“Yeah, sounds great.” Will feels dread begin to pool in his gut over the course of the long silence. He only realizes when he hears the scratch of pen on paper that Lucas was only looking for something to write with.

“So, seven o’clock at Joetta’s in Culpepper?” Asks Lucas, and it rings faint and sad like wind chimes, as if he can’t believe this is happening either. Will feels something twinge in his chest.

“Yeah.” Will returns, just as quietly. “See you then, Lucas.”

“Until Friday, Will.”

There is a long silence, neither willing to hang up and neither able to say anymore.

“Goodbye.” Will says and it comes out in a mangled rush. He disconnects with a sigh. He closes his eyes and lets his head fall back. It dangles. One of the dogs that had curled up at his feet reaches up to nose at his overlong hair.

“Holy shit.” Will breathes, ebullient chuckles floating up to the ceiling, lighter than birthday balloons. He wonders at the absurdity of life, the unlikelihood of a beautiful man agreeing to have dinner with him, and laughs again.

“Jesus christ.” He shakes his head. The dogs loosen up as the tension around their master dissipates.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

Lucas can't believe what he has done. He's horrified and elated and...mostly horrified. He cradles his phone in his hand, it's still warm. He cannot believe he's just been asked on a date, and can hardly even believe he'd said yes. He has not been on a date in an embarrassingly long time, not since he had lived in New York City upon first arriving to America. It has been even longer since he touched another person. Lucas imagines the length of Will Graham, that wicked pointed little mouth, those big blue eyes, his trim frame deceptively delicate and petite despite his height. He groans.

"What have I done?" He asks his empty apartment. He has no idea how to behave on a date, what to wear, how to be. He can't imagine why someone as attractive and unusually charming as Will Graham would want to spend a second of their time with him.

Will's words ring in his ears. He blushes.

"Sweet as chess pie." He murmurs to himself, his ears feel warm. He paces his apartment, going through room to sparsely furnished room until he comes to his bedroom. It consists of a large unmade bed and nothing else. He opens up the door to his closet. His entire wardrobe barely fills up a quarter of it. Black pants, brown pants, a pair of jeans, and a pair of sweatpants hang there. All of his long sleeved and turtleneck shirts are neatly folded on the top shelf. His winter coat, brown and worn every day, hangs next to it. He sighs.

"Maybe it's time I go to Walmart." He says to himself, and flees from the room as his phone buzzes. It's a client. His woes are momentarily forgotten, lost to the prospect of work.

Two days pass this way, with Lucas buried under a mountain of texts and questions and negotiating, before his next project is settled and he is ready to begin. It is only as he goes to his closet to fetch a new set of clothes to change into that he remembers that it is Wednesday, he has a date on Friday, and he has nothing whatsoever that is remotely presentable. In a panic he decides to check his e-mails, just to calm himself down.

Lucas deletes spam email after spam email. He made the mistake of signing a petition to help tackle student debt back when he lived in New York City and has been haunted by the website he signed it on ever since. He gets so into the deletion groove that he nearly deletes an e-mail from his favorite student and sole friend, Ji-u.

She asks how he is and how things are going with his boyfriend. He grimaces and considers brushing it off, but he has no one to discuss any of this with, and almost cannot help but respond in earnest. He tries to tell her that he has a date Friday and nothing to wear in a way that sounds less pathetic than it is, and barely succeeds.

She e-mails him back less than ten minutes after his reply. She tells him that she's picking him up the following morning and they are going shopping. She asks for his address and he gives it, without a fight. He does not particularly want to go, but he knows he must. The thought of showing up to his date in the same pants he's been wearing for at least two years fills him with more dread than the thought of shopping with Ji-u does.

Lucas buries himself fitfully in work for the rest of the day and spends the night tossing and turning. Sleep and sleeplessness blend and stretch and bind, warping the sharp corners of his bare bedroom. Every crack in paint becomes a needling schism. Every water stain scores his eyes. He grits his teeth.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

It had taken Will days upon days upon days of grueling grading, but he finally has all of his papers done. He barely manages to fit them all in his messenger bag, or stop them all from escaping as he jams the bag into the back seat of his car. His least favorite part of every semester is this, when he has to sit in his office and hand out papers to his students.

He peels onto the dirt road leading away from his property with a scowl on his face. He cranks the radio on to a classic rock station, just because its less annoying than everything else, and hums along to Tom Sawyer by Rush. He tries to clear his mind and the white noise quickly turns to anxiety. As he turns onto the highway and slides into autopilot he is distracted by his own malaise at having to spend the next four hours in his office being gawked at. He catches the exit he would need to take to get to Culpepper, where he'll be eating dinner with Lucas in a little less than 24 hours, out of the corner of his eye and his mild anxiety turns to elation and fear.

"Fuck." Will mutters to himself as he changes lanes. He imagines Lucas sitting across the table from him, sharp cheekbones, full lips, hair streaked with grey, perched on top of the mass of fluff which is his winter coat. Will wonders what he's hiding under there and stops himself before he can begin to imagine. He has more than a few scars of his own which he hopes Lucas will see in time.

Will knows this is a date, but what if Lucas doesn't consider it one? What if he thinks it's a strictly friendship dinner? Will replays their conversation in his mind, wondering if there is anyway at all Lucas could have misinterpreted or missed their blatant flirtatiousness, which seemed to pass between them as naturally as breathing. He taps his fingers on the steering wheel.

It seems that one moment he is driving on the highway and the next he is in the faculty parking lot. Will shrugs as he exits his car, making it feet away before he grabs his bag stuffed with papers. He accidentally slams the messenger bag into the car next to his, which he notices with a wince is black Bentley worth more than he makes in a year. After ascertaining that he's done no damage to the car, he heads for his office.

Will avoids eye contact with anyone, and arrives at his office ten minutes late to find a line of students already at his door. Already feeling overwhelmed in a sea of careless impressions, he puts on his glasses, unlocks his office door, and settles inside at his desk.

The first student standing by his desk he does not recognize whatsoever. He's of average height, average build, and has average mud brown hair.

"Name?" Will asks and it comes out gruff and cracked, since he has barely spoken since waking.

"Daniel Cash." His voice as well is perfectly middling, not too loud too soft or particularly noteworthy. Will can see him in ten years as a glorified desk jockey filling out paperwork all day. Will flips through the papers, coming to his. He hands it to him. Daniel Cash had earned a 77% on his final paper. Will barely recalls it either.

"Thank you, sir." Daniel says and leaves abruptly. A petite Indian woman steps up after him. Her long black hair gleams. She has a certain knack for killers, her paper had been excellent, and Will does remember her.

"Aparajita Narang." She says, even though Will is already looking for her paper. He hands it to her but keeps his eyes on his desk. She had gotten a 94%, one of the highest grades in the class.

"Good work." He says as she takes it out of his hands. Will is a notorious bastard and tough-as-nails grader. He hasn't handed out a pity A in his entire career. He imagines if he had a RateMyProfessor profile it would read like a burn book.

"Thank you, Professor Graham!" She says, her heavily accented voice musical in its delight. Will keeps his eyes away from her and says nothing as she departs and the next student comes up to his desk.

"Blaise Jackson." Says the next one. Will doesn't even bother to look up at him.

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

Lucas is finishing his coffee, already wrapped in his winter coat, when he gets a notification of an e-mail from Ji-u. She's outside. Lucas grits his teeth, affixes his glasses, and slowly makes his way out of his building with the gallows swagger of a man awaiting his own execution.

When he exits the building what he sees nearly makes him run back inside and call the whole thing off. Ji-u sits in the drivers seat of a lavender open top jeep. Three other kids are crammed in the back, animatedly giggling amongst themselves. When Ji-u spots him she honks and they all wave. Lucas waves back hesitantly while feeling the urge to run as far away as possible.

"Get in!" Ji-u calls and he obeys. He gets into the passenger side.

"Are you ready to go shopping, Professor?" She asks and he shrugs.

"I hope you don't mind, but some of my friends wanted to come help. This is my best friend's girlfriend Kaja."

Ji-u points to a very petite girl with wiry dishwater hair sitting on the lap of another girl dressed head to toe in different shades of denim. Kaja waves with a smile. Her dark green lipstick is all over her teeth.

"That is my best friend Jen."

The girl head to toe in denim waves in time with her girlfriend, though she does not smile. Lucas notes that Jen is holding hands with the boy in the seat opposite her. He is impossibly tall and impossibly thin, with a rather pinched and starved expression. Lucas does not know much about fashion, but something about him is effortlessly refined and starkly effete.

"And that's Jen's boyfriend Val."

Val holds out his hand to be shaken and it nearly dwarfs Lucas's own.

"He's a model. He knows fashion." Says Ji-u. Lucas agrees.

"Um, Hello, everyone." He says very awkwardly.

“He’s very shy.” Says Ji-u, and they all nod in understanding as she starts up the car. Lucas wants to die.

“What do you assholes want to listen to? I have that Pussy Riot mix from Dave, Goats Head Soup, and unfortunately the demo of Shawn Beau’s new horn-less ska band.”

Everyone groans in unison. Lucas has no idea why.

“How do you have a fucking ska band without horns?” Asks Kaja. Lucas immediately recognizes her accent as Polish. He has no clue what ska is.

“Fucking white people.” Says Val. He takes a flask out of his pocket with a pale, well-manicured hand and drinks from it.

“Yeah, fuck you guys.” Says Ji-u and Lucas wonders what universe he has entered as everyone in the car agrees.

“I have that Sufjan Christmas album.” Says Jen.

“I have Lenny Kravitz’s Greatest Hits!” Says Kaja.

“I have The Pink Print.” Says Val.

“The car only takes CD’s. The radio doesn’t work.” Ji-u explains.

“I have some Pink Floyd.” Lucas offers quietly, feeling very ridiculous and very out of his depth.

“Ooh! Do you have The Wall?” Asks Kaja and Lucas does his best not to look at the green lipstick smeared across her teeth in the mirror.

“Uh, just Dark Side of the Moon, sorry. It was in the car when I bought it.”

Lucas knows he is out of his depth when they all declare this to be the coolest thing they have ever heard and demand that he get it. He hears them talking about how much they love dad rock as he gets the CD out of his car and wonders at when he became an old man.

He gets back into Ji-u’s car, puts in the CD, and off they go.

“Where do you want to go shopping?” She asks.

“There’s a Walmart in town?” Lucas suggests and she grimaces. Lucas fights the urge to apologize.

“We’re going to the Mall in Marietta.” She announces. Lucas does not much like malls or other people. His mouth sets into a tight line as they speed down the road.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

“Jason Choi.” Mumbles a trainee so quietly that Will can barely understand him.

“Again.” Says will with a tired sigh.

“Jason Choi.” The trainee repeats and Will leafs through the considerable remains of the stack for his paper. He hardly remembers it. A red 70% glares on top of the paper as Will holds it out next to him, without even looking. Somewhat affronted by this display, Jason Choi takes his paper and stalks out of the room. His severe, sharply boned face is horror-film worthy in its anger. Will rolls his eyes.

“Next!” He calls as he prays for death.

“Cavanaugh Hartley.” Announces a stocky redhead. Will knows of her. She is known for getting into arguments with her professors in class. Alana had complained to him about her several times. She has yet to try him. He wonders if this will be it, or he’ll get away unscathed.

He holds out her paper. A red 76% shows at the top. He sees the indignation begin to form around her like a cloud. He makes eye contact with her, pouring every ounce of his exhaustion, and general 'don't try me kid' malaise into it. She takes her paper and leaves the room. Whatever she had seen in his face that had cowed her had also put all of the other waiting trainees on edge. The next in line looks scared to come forward.

“Next.” Will barely manages not to grind out.

“Addison Nichols.”

Though younger than Will by over ten years, this young man dwarfs him. If the FBI academy does not work out for him, Will could imagine him being an excellent bouncer. He has a bully's face. Will does not remember reading his paper at all, but the 89% scrawled at the top tells him that the younger man will most likely not have to resort to a life of pushing around inebriated assholes anytime soon. Will half considers telling him to pursue a more untroubled existence before sticking out his paper.

“Thank you, Professor.” Addison Nichols says as takes it and takes his leave.

“Cerise Godet!” Announces herself with an exuberant trill, a lone confidant voice in a hall of trainees quaking in the presence of their odd, spooky, harsh-grading professor. If Will remembers correctly, and he is sure he does, she should not sound so confident. Her farce of a final paper had read like a pitch for a Chesapeake Ripper blockbuster film. He grimaces as he looks through his stack of papers. Will gets to the bottom only to find that it isn’t there.

“Where’s my paper?” She asks and everyone falls silent.

“It looks as if I misplaced it. All of your grades have already been put in. I can mail it to you when I find it if you want.” Will answers blandly.

“Actually, no grade has been put in for me, Professor.” She crosses her arms. Will admires her gumption but still would rather be stabbed repeatedly than deal with any of this.

“E-mail me your paper.” He says. “I’ll have it graded by the end of the day.”

Will feels her flash of anger like a physical slap.

“Apologies.” He says and it sounds entirely disingenuous. She folds her arms.

“Thank you, Professor.” She says and walks out of the room, gait stiff as she can barely repress her annoyance. Will sighs.

“Next!” He calls, more forcefully than he had intended.

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

Lucas has never been to Marietta, Virginia and as they drive through it he does not feel compelled to return. In New York City he had seen buildings larger than any he had ever seen before in his life. At times it almost felt like a giant shopping mall to him, a never ending retail sprawl. The Marietta Mall is the largest structure he has seen at some time, but does nothing to compare. It is not exactly dilapidated, but looks worn and on the verge of beginning of disintegration. He sighs as the car comes to a stop outside.

Ji-u, Val, Jen, and Kaja hop out of the car and Lucas follows, looking uncomfortable and unsure. Ji-u elbows him jokingly and he almost jumps out of his skin.

“It’ll be ok.” She says and Lucas does not believe her, but forces a small and blatantly insincere smile.

He walks beside Ji-u as they follow her three friends into the mall. He is pleasantly surprised to find it almost empty inside. He can spot maybe ten people in total between the two floors, other than the people working there. He takes a breath he hadn’t realized he had been holding.

“Marietta is one step away from being a complete ghost town.” Says Ji-u.

“When I was a kid this place was full all week. They’d have all kinds of events here on weekends.” Says Val with wistful regret. “All December it was a mall santa hell.”

“You were born here?” Asks Lucas. He can’t believe someone so strange and sharp and ethereal looking would come from such a mundane place.

“Yeah.” Val looks up at the ceiling as if he can still see the decorations hanging there from old events. “My mom and dad still live out by the highway. It used to be farms.”

A strange sadness overcomes them all. Lucas hardly knows what to say.

“How about we try out Bloomingdales?” Ji-u asks. The others all nod in agreement and start to walk. Lucas follows. He takes in the barrage of stores with detached interest, letting the chatter of the kids he’s with wash over him while absorbing none of what they are actually saying. He nearly bumps into Kaja as they come to a sudden stop.

“Teavana.” Ji-u says. Lucas watches as the kids each try a sample of tea from the blatantly high store employee. Her red eyes and stretched smile she is unconscious of mark her easily. While it has not bothered Lucas in a long time, he has never quite gotten used to the prevalence of drugs in rural America. He swears a quarter of the people he sees at least are clearly on something. He turns down the tea sample and is glad when they move on.

Inside the Marietta Mall is not disgusting, but it is verging on disrepair. The amount of trash on the ground seems disproportionate to the vacancy of the building. Lucas follows them to the Bloomingdales at the end of the corridor as they chat animatedly. Jen, Val, and Kaja all hold hands. Lucas imagines if anyone was around they might be scandalized.

Lucas feels momentarily assaulted by the hospital-bright lights of the Bloomingdales and regains his bearings as he is led on past the sea of colorful clothes in the women’s section to the drastically less colorful men’s section.

Val groans. “It’s like all these hicks think if you wear a pattern cocks will start flying at your face.”

“Didn’t that happen once to you in New Orleans?” Kaja asks, dark green lipstick now somehow on her nose too. It is also on Jen’s nose. Val nods with a pleased grin and the girls all laugh. Lucas has no idea what to say.

“So, point me toward something you like.” Val says and Lucas can’t even imagine what he is supposed to pick. He has never been particularly fashion-forward and can’t imagine he will make the right decision. He wants to stay in his coat. He wants to go home.

“I’m not sure.” He says. Val shakes his head.

“How about we set up a dressing room for him? Do you know what size you are?” Ji-u tries. Honestly Lucas doesn’t know. He hasn’t bought anything in years.

“No, he doesn’t.” Says Val. “Everything he’s wearing is way too big.”

“I lost some weight.” Says Lucas.

“Ji-u, you know him well. You come with me. We’ll pick out some things. Jen, Kaja, get him in a dressing room.” Jen and Kaja salute and each take one of Lucas’s hands, leading him away from the men’s section.

“You’re very quiet.” Says Kaja. Lucas doesn’t know what to say. “It’s ok, I’m used to it. Jen hasn’t said anything since 1947.”

“That’s a long time.” Lucas replies. They lead him to a dressing room and he is surprised when they follow him inside.

“So, are you both students too?” Lucas asks.

“Jen met me when she was backpacking across Europe last summer.” Offers Kaja. “I live in Krakow. Jen studies Interdisciplinary Sculpture at MICA.”

“The art school in Baltimore?” Asks Lucas. Jen nods.

“As for me, I teach the violin sometimes. I mostly just travel. In a few days I’m going to stay with Jen’s girlfriend in Vegas.”

Jen and Kaja have curled up together on the bench. Lucas remains in the corner of the dressing room, watching as Jen carefully cards her fingers through her hair. Lucas wants to know how Jen has managed to have so many lovers concurrently, who are all ok with it, when she seems even less inclined to speak than he.

“Jen has lovers in four countries, don’t you baby?”

Jen only shrugs, seemingly more interested in playing with her girlfriend’s hair. Lucas does not understand. He is almost grateful when he hears Ji-u and Val return. They bicker amicably and Lucas can tell by their labored steps that they are carrying mountains of clothes. He hopes that Will is worth all this, but feels in his gut that he will be.

Lucas watches in horror as the door is opened, Jen and Kaja pop off the bench in his tiny dressing room, and a horrifying mountain of clothing is dumped onto it.

“Holy shit.” He says and Ji-u laughs.

“Try stuff on! Show us!” She says and slams the door. Lucas looks to the mountain of clothing in all sorts of colors he has never worn, and all of the jeans that look way too small for him. He begins to unzip his brown winter coat. He is halfway through unzipping when the door flings open. It’s Val.

“Can I get a before picture for my instagram?” He asks. The others all stand behind him, also holding up their phones. Lucas isn’t sure what he means. He steps out of the dressing room and re-zips his coat to the neck.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

Something vague and sharp around the edges spills across the darkness, slick as oil. Will watches his reflection pool and disperse within it. He is suspended, motionless, numb, detached entirely from himself. He watches as the lines which roughly correspond to the shape of his face begin to ripple with the force of strange vibrations, growing louder and louder and louder and louder.

On the crown of this indistinct mass of flesh, roughly corresponding to a human face, pulsing with violence and the certainty of death, two protrusions begin to form. In the inky consciousness which encases them ripples come from beneath it, growing stronger and stronger and stronger. Will wants to clamp his hands over his ears but cannot move. He feels a presence, knife-like and all encompassing. It is deafening and entirely unlike sound. It drags nearer and nearer and nearer.

Something is coming.

Will awakes with a bitten off scream, alerting his entire pack who swarm with excitement and sudden adrenaline. His chest heaves. He drips with sweat. Beads tickle as they run into his ears and down his neck past his shirt collar.

He swallows, noting the darkness which surrounds him and unable to face the clock.

“It’s just a fucking date, Graham.” He says to himself, the levity doing nothing to soothe him from the threat of the inky void, which seems to have followed him from his dreams and into the dark corners of his home. He knows that while that is a source of his anxiety, the stuff of his dreams is not derived from anything so mundane.

Will showers, thinks of masturbating but doesn’t feel like it. He stands naked under the frigid spray, quaking like a live wire. Through a gap in the curtain he can see the fur of puppy paws poking through the bathroom door. Unlike most dogs, his ridiculously fluffy mutt Olive always wants a bath, and will occasionally wait for him outside the door in the hopes of getting in.

“Strange old girl.” He mutters as he scrubs his skin, the soap having long since been washed away. As if knowing she has been acknowledged, Olive butts her big head against the door.

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

Lucas knows that if he wants to be on time to meet Will he has to leave in a few hours. He also knows that he has no idea what to wear. Val and Ji-u had cobbled together all manner of outfits, explaining what works and why, and still he feels adrift. Over \$500 poorer and a half-full closet richer he still wonders if in whatever he chooses to wear he will be able to fool Will for even a second that he is enough.

He looks at his stubble in the mirror, growing in silver. He thinks he looks haggard and old.

“He must be 20 years younger than you.” Lucas says as he touches his salt and pepper stubble. He looks at the lines in his face, the grey strands infecting his hair, the thatch of silvery hair poking out from the top of his undershirt. He finds himself and wan and sick and old, decidedly lacking.

Lucas has always been small, especially compared to the other Danish men back home. Even at six feet, his frame gave him the impression of someone smaller, despite his wiry musculature. To find he had lost even more weight, and shrunk past even that had been alarming. Val had him in clothes one and two sizes smaller than he had ever worn before. He looks at the hollows between his bones, the jut of his collar bones, the sharpened architecture of his face and sighs.

“What am I going to do?” He asks his empty bedroom as he goes toward his newly stocked closet. He hears Val in his head.

“Consider a blazer and jeans your uniform. You can’t go wrong.” The boy had told him.

Lucas retrieves a pair of dark jeans and a muted grey tweed blazer with a sigh. He lays them onto his bed and goes to the bags of folded shirts still on the ground, because he does not own a dresser. They all look garishly printed and colored to him. He regrets not being more assertive. He can’t imagine himself ever truly wearing a lilac button up with tiny whales stitched all over it. He vacillates between something muted and something ridiculous before he settles on a clean and simple plain deep maroon button up.

The only thing Lucas had truly found himself drawn toward over the course of their shopping experience was shoes, and retrieves the boxes he had bought from the corner of the room with enthusiasm. He chooses a pair that gleam burgundy like a resplendent cherry wood

armoire before laying them out next to the clothing he has not put on yet. He can't imagine leaving the house in any of it and tries to distract himself with a soothing shave.

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

Will glares between the two top drawers of his dresser, more flannel than anything else, with disgust. Alana had occasionally made a subtle friendly jab at his outfits, and he had never seriously taken it into consideration. He figured she was only joking when she accused him of wearing nothing but flannel. Will knew that considering the simple rule of probability, it was it was almost impossible for her to have never seen him in anything but flannel.

Will realizes now that she had not been joking in the slightest.

He half closes his top dresser drawer, forgoes the one below it entirely, and goes to the bathroom to debate whether he wants to shave his face or not.

Meanwhile, Lucas walks slowly out of his apartment building, winter coat abandoned, dressed only in a deep maroon button up, sharply lined soft grey tweed blazer, dark jeans, and gleaming burgundy shoes. He feels naked and strange, and after an agonizing internal debate, runs back into his apartment to retrieve it before heading back to his car.

He hangs it over the seat next to him, looking at the two CD's given to him by Ji-u's friends on the seat.

Val had given him a cd with the words 'Pinoy Reggae Mix' written across the front. Kaja had given him a CD with nothing written on it at all, but had assured him that he would love it. He looks between them and instead puts Dark Side of the Moon in his car's CD player. With the look of a man headed to his imminent death, Lucas pulls out of his driveway.

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays.

Joetta's sits on the side of the road in Culpepper, Virginia. It looks rather like three shacks stapled together, as if a gust of wind could take it down. However, it has some the best and most delicious New Orleans style cuisine Will has ever tasted outside of New Orleans. It's been a favorite of his ever since he discovered it on a long meandering drive when he'd first moved to Wolf Trap, and he is delighted to share it with someone.

Even if he is also terrified.

He pulls into the restaurant ten minutes early, feeling awkward and strange, dressed in the same clothes he teaches in, beard a little neater from a conscientious trim, and hair a little messier from running his fingers through it nervously. He has pulled a curl almost flat in his anxiety. He quickly shoots Lucas a text before heading inside to snag them a table.

Joetta's is homey and earthy inside with green walls, a soft yellow ceiling, and an eclectic mishmash of comfortable old furniture. There is no one in there with the exception of a group of women, who talk loudly and happily, laughing together.

Lucas feels his phone buzz and takes it out to check it while he heads down the long empty country road. His GPS tells him he is only about fifteen minutes from Joetta's. As he reads Will's text, friendly and simple words, telling him to head right inside, the entirety of the situation is thrown into stark relief. Lucas's throat feels dry.

He is giddy and nervous, elated and terrified. The timeworn cliché, having butterflies in your stomach, feels like a veritable reality. The country sprawls before him, near empty to see and beginning to click with nocturnal insects. He breathes in and out.

Will sits at the table, nervously drinking glass after glass of water and looking out the window every minute or so. He pretends he's not watching the parking lot, though he is afraid that Lucas might not come at all.

As a beaten up old red four door toyota pulls into the parking lot of Joetta's, will nearly spills his entire glass of water on the ground. He recognizes Lucas's brown winter jacket. He recognizes his presence and feels nerves clang inside him like metal bowls careening down a winding staircase.

Will watches Lucas debate with himself, whether to leave the coat on or take it off. He watches as he settles for leaving it on and unzipped, and wishes he would leave it off. Will greedily thinks of the long lines of his runner's body, hidden beneath unforgiving layers. He turns his eyes away as Lucas comes to the front of Joetta's. He takes a deep breath as the door opens and the bell rings clear and sweet.

"Will?"

Will nearly jumps at the sound of his name being called. He shoots up, sitting as rigid as a spooked cat. He looks at Lucas, handsome and strange. The softness of his voice hits Will like drops of cool calming water.

"H-hi Lucas." He tries again. "Glad you could make it."

"Me too." Says Lucas as he settles in across from Will. Their feet accidentally knock together as Lucas arranges himself and Will feels it like a shock.

"Sorry!" Lucas apologizes immediately. His voice is calm but Will can feel his inner turmoil sharp as a lightning strike.

"I don't mind." Will says, and immediately wonders if he's blushing as hard as he feels like he should be. Lucas's hesitant grin and his dark eyes, bashful and delighted and sparkling, tell him everything he needs to know.

"Did you find the place, ok?" Will tries again and Lucas nods.

"We are deep in the country, but not so deep that my GPS could not get its signal."

"Trust me, Culpepper is hardly as deep as it gets. There's hardly ten confederate flags in the whole town."

"I never understood that about Americans." Lucas speaks quietly, barely catching weight in the empty room. Will finds himself drawn in and is by the man's own gravity, to catch every little word.

"Most Americans don't either, honestly. It's mostly just pride and ignorance." He offers, and Lucas smiles a little and shakes his head more.

"Now, Will." The way Lucas's lips curl around his name is seductive. Will has to look away. "Apparently you aren't a very good southern boy after all."

It takes a solid thirty seconds for it to click into place in Will's beleaguered mind that he is being flirted with. Those thirty seconds of blankness on his face stretch before Lucas like footpath littered with broken glass.

"That's just something I tell all the girls, you know how it is." Will eventually says, and Lucas's sigh of relief washes across Will head to toe.

"Can I fix y'all's boys anything?" The waitress is short, plump, and barely looks a day over 14. Her wild cherry-red hair is barely restrained by a hair clip and her smile is bright.

Lucas flips open his menu and begins to search for something, anything. Will feels his anxiety acutely.

“Give us a second to look.” He says, and while he is not immensely rude, the waitress looks taken aback by his prickly response. “Please, darlin.” He adds, mirroring the waitress’s accent before he can stop himself.

“Ok! Well, my name’s Presley Ann if y’all need anything. Be back in a minute!” She flounces away.

"Please, darlin?" Lucas echoes, teasing, the southern accent a bizarre mush mixed with his own.

Will's first thought is that it's adorable. His second thought is to punch himself across the mouth, or pray until the floor swallows him up, or just about anything.

"Perhaps you are a good southern boy after all." Says Lucas and Will can't help but feel relief. He remembers that Lucas doesn't know about his mirror neurons, about his abilities, about his general weirdness. It's refreshing and soothing and perfect.

Will tips a cowboy hat he's not wearing. Lucas's gentle laugh washes over him like a cool breeze.

Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays and Sundays.

When Lucas looks at him fondly, and laughs a small understated laugh, Will can't help the relief that pours over him like cool water on a hot day. Their food sits in front of them, cold and almost untouched, shrimp and grits for Will and gumbo for Lucas. They are focused wholly on each other. Their feet rest comfortably together under the table in a soft tangle.

"Does your accent always come back when you talk to other people with a similar one?" Lucas asks and Will shakes his head.

"I lived in so many places growing up that I hardly even know what my real accent is."

"It sounds like New Orleans, to me." Lucas says, simultaneously astute and fond. "It is a very pleasant one."

Will feels so pleased that he's afraid he might blush. "It makes up for the fact that I haven't had a pleasant thing to say in thirty years."

"Thirty years?" Asks Lucas.

"Even as a kid I was a bastard." Will insists and Lucas shakes his head.

"I was too quiet for that. I hardly said one word before I turned sixteen."

"What happened when you were sixteen?" Asks Will and Lucas looks around them, checking to see if anyone is paying them any mind. Their waitress is with the group of women on the opposite side of the restaurant. They cackle raucously together.

"My first boyfriend....sort of." Say Lucas, so softly that Will barely hears it. "We fought a lot." Lucas says it with an almost wistful roll of his eyes and turns his attention fully back to Will. He feels warm and delighted by the older man's regard. "He was also a bastard."

Will's laugh is buoyant with relief. This strange, wonderful man wants him. He can feel it. In their tangled feet, in the way he looks at him, in the roughening of his quiet voice, unused to long conversation and laughter. Occasionally one of them moves and their feet catch and sparks set their skin alight. They are beautiful together in the rustic, mismatched, quaint little restaurant. They realize their food has gone cold together, too wrapped up in each other to pay it any attention, and share a low laugh.

“Should we have them boxed?” Asks Lucas and for a moment Will feels the fear, the nervousness, head on and full force. Then he feels the soft leather of one of Lucas’s impeccable shoes, the toe catching on his protruding ankle bone, and he finds he knows exactly what he means.

“I have a refrigerator.” Says Will, before he can help himself, and fights the urge to visibly wince at himself. He is sure that if there were global rankings of the worst come-ons imaginable, that would be in the top ten at least. When Lucas looks at him as if that had been what he was waiting to hear all night his internal panic mellows to blissful white noise.

“Are you offering, Will?”

Will nearly blushes, pink and pleased, his eyelashes fan across his cheeks and Lucas feels desire burn low and hot within him. In this alone he feels his anxieties start to melt away as he zeroes in on the beautiful man before him. He imagines the length of Will's body beneath his clothes, the bulky casual wear belying how slender he is. He looks at his lithe wrists, his pale neck, the fine bones beneath his scruff.

Will looks at Lucas through the dark smudges of his eyelashes and nods. Lucas licks his lips.

“Presley Ann.” Lucas calls, a little louder than he has been all evening but barely just. If there had been more people in the restaurant she probably would not have heard him at all. The baby-faced waitress walks over to them, charming smile and all. “Can we have boxes for these, please?”

Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays.

Lucas follows Will all the way back to his house, driving behind at a respectful distance. Will frets, catching glimpses of him whenever he can. He has peeked through Lucas's tightly controlled exterior to the heart of him at moments, sensed his anger and can only imagine how this mild mannered and soft spoken man might break and crack once given the opportunity. He wonders if it has been as long for Lucas as for him since the last time. His untouched shrimp and grits sitting in a container in the passenger seat, somehow mocking.

Will wants to touch and he wants to be touched. His skin thrums, his usually comfortable and utilitarian clothing which he hardly notices chafing like a small cage. He groans.

At a stop light Will looks behind him to see Lucas waving, goofy and fond. Will's smile reads like a grimace as he waves back. He doesn't know if he wants to fuck or be fucked, but all he knows is that he's going to destroy this strange and beautiful man. Will had forgotten his own shamelessness, his own proclivities, his own desires, and finds himself suddenly aching. He knows he wants to spend hours sucking his cock. He knows that he could.

The drive to his house simultaneously feels like a torturous eternity and an instant. He gets out of his car and watches as Lucas pulls up beside him and gets out.

They stand between their cars in his driveway. Mere inches apart, knees almost touching. The air crackles between them. Will is about to open his mouth to speak, to dispel the tension, and ruin the moment, when Lucas grabs him and presses their lips together.

Will's mouth opens in surprise as Lucas winds around him, a hand in his hair and another snaking around his waist to keep him close. He sinks against Lucas, boneless and guileless, allowing himself to be fully enveloped by arms that feel wiry with strength. He takes full advantage, hands sliding from between Lucas's shoulders to as low as they can go before becoming indecent. He revels in the play of the man's muscle as he handles him.

When Lucas's tongue delves into his mouth he feels it like an electric jolt, powerful and incredible. Will pulls away, only to tease, hoping Lucas might seek him out, and might take the kiss from him, but Lucas takes it to heart instead. Will takes one look at his face, confused and dejected, utterly crestfallen, before taking it into his hands. He revels in the scrape of stubble against the soft spots in his work-worn palms.

“Lucas...” Will begins, low and quiet, trying to soothe the panic he can feel rising within the other man.

“Is something wrong?” Lucas asks and Will shakes his head. He presses his entire body against Lucas’s, bending his knees so he can nestle beneath his chin and rub against his jaw like a big cat.

“I just like to...you know...” Will says softly as he winds his arms around Lucas, insinuating them beneath his jacket to get as close to his skin as he can.

“Take it slow?” Asks Lucas and Will shakes his head, somewhat bashful. An awkward smile splits his lips and he is glad that his face is buried in Lucas’s chest, where it cannot be seen.

“Tease.” He corrects and he feels the shift in Lucas instantaneously. Lucas’s large hands, still somewhat hesitant, take to his jaw and tilt up his face. Will lowers his lashes, and feels the larger man’s exhale against his skin.

“You like to play coy?” He asks, low and tinged with something dark. It sparks a craving in Will. Fulfills a desperate need. He starts to shake his head and is stopped when Lucas presses a finger to his lower lip, bends it to a flush distortion beneath the pad of one of his thick fingers and lets it go.

“No.” Says Will. His body hums as Lucas keeps one hand cradling his face, and snakes the other down to wrap entirely around his hip. Lucas moves toward him again, poised to kiss, and this time when Will tries to dodge him by turning his head he’s fully prepared. He tightens his hold on the side of his face, holding him still and bending down to take his kiss.

Will moans into it, opening fully and allowing Lucas to set the pace, he feels the slick slide of their tongues all the way to his toes, which curl in his shoes. He sounds blissful and adrift, nearly boneless with the exception of his hands, which explore every inch of Lucas that they can reach. He curls one in his hair and pulls as the man bites his lower lip.

In the quiet summer night their breaths and groans sound loud as thunder between them. Will barely hears Lucas tell him that he’s beautiful over his heart as it pounds in his ears.

When they break apart to breathe Will reaches for Lucas’s hand, hesitant and unsure. Lucas grabs his hand back, nearly dwarfing his slender fingers. Will wonders at the size of his hands, can’t remember if its big hands or big feet that mean a big cock. Breathless and thrumming with desire, his own private joke curves his lips into a wry smirk Lucas finds devastating. He leads Lucas into his home by the hand.

Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays,

The dogs come forward to inspect the newcomer with interest, but with a simple command Will has them all sitting and waiting.

“I can introduce you later.” Will says and Lucas can’t help but flush with warmth, thinking that this beautiful man expects him to stay and intends to introduce him to his family. His thoughts are interrupted as Will all but drags him from the living room and up the stairs to his bedroom. Once through the threshold they stand together, the moments stretch and warp between them, both on virtually new ground after so long alone.

“Can I...?” Lucas begins quietly and Will can’t help a little wry laugh. He feels desire begin to pool in his gut, he knows that soon he’ll be hard.

“Yeah.” Says Will and suddenly Lucas is upon him, kissing and biting and licking and grabbing. Will slides the other man’s jacket from his shoulders and starts on his shirt buttons as it falls to the floor. Lucas has one hand on his ass, and Will swears he can feel the bite of his nails through the fabric. He presses into the touch and Lucas squeezes. His hands falter on the buttons they’re working on and his cock twitches.

“You like to be handled, don’t you Will?”

Will shakes his head and Lucas grins. A quiet laugh escapes him as he slides his fingers into Will’s back pocket and takes an even firmer handful of his plush little bottom. Will all but pants against him, suddenly stilling as his head rests by the open topmost button beneath his collar.

“Lucas!” Will whispers with mild delight as he unbuttons the man’s shirt farther and farther to reveal a thatch of chest hair, wiry and thick. Lucas undoes the buttons on his cuffs and watches as Will pulls off his shirt. This too pools to the floor.

Will takes in the length of Lucas’s torso. He’s too thin, almost sick-looking. His ribs make stark indentations in his sides. Will traces his thick chest hair, to where it tapers off into a line that leads beneath his belt. He feels shy all of the sudden, and when he reaches out to touch that masculine smattering of hair he finds his hand hovering above it.

“Can I...?” Will begins and Lucas takes his hand and presses it against his chest. Will feels the pounding of his heart, steady and sure. As he begins to move his hand, and his other joins

it, he feels that heart beat start to speed. He twines his hands in it, mapping the gaunt yet somehow solid body with avaricious fingers.

“You like it?” Asks Lucas and Will nods.

“I can’t wait to feel it scrape against my back when you fuck me.”

Lucas stops in his tracks. His eyes widen and his mouth hangs open. Will blushes red and horrified at himself, his hands freezing where they had been playfully twined in his chest hair.

“I have this problem...” Will says, his face red and the flush traveling straight to his chest. “My default setting is...very dirty.” Lucas only watches him in the dark. Still and seemingly beyond words. “I can try to stop if its too much but sometimes when I get turned on I just...”

Lucas reaches for him and traces his kiss-bitten lips with the flat of his thumb. “You are a wonder, Will Graham.” He says with awe, his voice rough and cracked with disbelief and desire. “You say whatever you want to me.”

“Whatever I want?” Will asks, all faux wide-eyed innocence and soft dark curls. Lucas feels something predatory within himself twitch and unfurl in dark delight.

“Anything.” Lucas says. He presses kisses against Will’s skin from his forehead to the skin he exposes as he unbuttons his shirt. He lavishes kisses upon every inch of Will’s smooth skin he can reach. He sucks lightly on his collarbone, worrying it between his teeth. Will shudders.

“You know what I really want?” He asks, and his breath hitches as Lucas takes to the buttons on his cuffs, undoing each and pressing a kiss to the thin skin of his wrists. His lips linger there, feeling Will’s pulse pound as he scrapes the sharp edges of his teeth there.

“What?” Lucas whispers against his skin. He worries at it with his teeth.

“I want to suck you.” Says Will. His hands rest at Lucas’s belt against his bare stomach. His fingers sneak into the minimal space between the fabric and his flesh, heavy with promise. Lucas can already feel him between his legs, the phantom of heat and pressure to come. His cock throbs. Lucas only nods and stands helplessly as Will rips his belt open, unbuttons his pants, and slides down his pants and briefs with one movement. Lucas gasps as he is pushed gently onto the bed and Will spreads himself on top of him, forcing him to lay back.

Lucas lays still as Will removes his shoes and socks and haphazardly tosses them away. He feels his pants and underwear fall from his ankles and hears them land on the floor with a soft plop. Will is on him in an instant, rubbing and kissing and just as blissfully naked. Lucas takes the opportunity to rake his nails down his back and grab his ass. He grinds Will against him and their hard cocks brush together in exquisite friction.

“Jesus christ.” Will grunts and Lucas moves his hips in the same way again, just to keep him talking. He almost can’t help himself from continuing the slow grind of their cocks, though he wants so much more.

Lucas can't help his long low moan when Will wraps a hand around his cock and strokes.

"Where do I have to touch you to make you forget the English language?" Will asks as he strokes up and down, feeling the older man's foreskin retract beneath his semen-slick palm.

"Hvad engelske sprog?" Asks Lucas and Will laughs low and warm, tightening his grip as he peppers kisses from Lucas's chest, tracing the salt and pepper trail of hair leading straight to his leaking cock.

Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. Updates Wednesdays.

Will begins with little licks, exploratory and soft. Lucas's cock stands beneath his attentions, hot and hard and pulsing. When Will kisses the tip he groans. Lucas feels Will's hands settle against his legs as the man licks him from root to tip, slowly, as if savoring it.

When he feels Will teasing his slit, taking his time, using the tip of his tongue to flick and taste, he grunts long and low. His thighs tighten and quake as his cock chases that wet warmth, bobbing in reaction to the gentle tease. Lucas pants, feeling sweat bead in his hair and his breath catch in his throat.

"Will, I—" Whatever he was about to say turns to a long low groan as Will takes him into his throat as deep as he can. The shock of the tight warmth nearly undoes him. He fights not to thrust and digs a hand into Will's back, resisting the urge to bury his hands in hair and use him. He wants badly to jam his cock down his throat. Lucas feels his body clench tight and his breaths catch in his throat as he restrains himself.

When Will pops off of him after a long, languorous suck, the cold air assaults him and he bites out a curse. His balls feel heavy and hot between his legs as Will continues to palm them.

"Lucas," Will begins and Lucas feels anxiety spike mixed in with the thick arousal. He is desperate to cum, desperate to continue, desperate for Will to have not just changed his mind. What Will says is so far from what he expected that he can hardly believe it. For a second he can only see and hear white noise.

"Lucas, you can fuck my mouth."

Lucas chuckles, dark and low and relieved, as the white noise and relief melds back into pleasure. His cock throbs. He feels almost a spectator in his own body as Will grabs his hands and puts them in his hair. He gasps as those blue eyes regard him levelly, darkly, blown black with mutual desire. He feels Will tighten his own hands in his thick curls and Lucas takes initiative. He holds on tight, shoves Will's head down. He feels Will's cock start to leak against his leg.

"You really like to be treated in this way, don't you?" Asks Lucas, breathless with wonder and watches as Will shakes his head where it rests on his thigh next to his cock, breathing

tantalizing little puffs of air against it. Will groans as he is maneuvered again, Lucas using one hand to hold him in place and the other to feed him his cock.

Will's soft wail turns to gagging as Lucas begins to thrust in and out of his mouth, cruel fingers twisting in his hair and making his scalp tingle and burn with pleasure as his mouth is fucked.

Tears begin to leak from Will's eyes, glimmering against his long lashes like gems. His jaw aches.

"Do you need me to stop?" Asks Lucas through gritted teeth, still thrusting, Will's gagging spurring him on. His balls feel hot and tight. He thrums with pleasure. He knows he will not last much longer.

Will answers by looking dead into his eyes as he slides down his cock that last final inch, so he is flush against him. Lucas feels his battered throat quake around his throbbing cock.

"Jeg...kommer..." Lucas says and Will's does not know what he means. When he suddenly feels Lucas's hot seed flooding him, he understands entirely.

It is too much, and Will begins to gag in earnest, Lucas pulls out. Cum and spit drip from Will's mouth as he coughs and coughs and coughs. Lucas wraps around him, patting his back and stroking his hair as he spits cum onto the mattress.

"So good, Will." He soothes. "Vidunderlige." Even as Will stops coughing and curls against him in return, head resting on his chest, he continues to stroke his back and shoulders.

"I like this." Will says softly as he buries his face in Lucas's chest hair. He rests another hand on his sunken stomach as it travels the length of him and frowns. He feels the compulsion to feed this man immediately, make him more solid. It hits him with groan. "Shit."

Lucas stiffens immediately. "What's wrong?"

"We left our food in the car." Says Will and Lucas laughs long and low.

"Are you hungry, Will?"

Will honestly is not sure. He thinks he might and probably should be. He can't place the last time he has really eaten anything. He looks down at his own penis. Though he had been hard and on the verge of desperately aching moments ago, after coughing up semen all he really felt in the mood for was one of those throat numbing cough drops and feeding Lucas something particularly fattening.

"You're pretty big, Lucas." He says, even though Lucas is probably only slightly larger than average. He thinks warmly of his uncircumcised penis, its flushed head and upward curve. He imagines fucking himself on it and feels that telltale flicker of heat low in his belly. Perhaps he is not so spent. "Taking a cock like that is hard work."

Lucas is blushing, pleased and oddly boyish in his embarrassment.

“You know, you’re pretty cute for somebody who just skull fucked a man.”

Lucas looks halfway between a delirious grin and tremendous personal pain. “Do you want me to get the food for you?” He asks and Will laughs a little, musical with delight.

“Sure, and get your own food too.”

“Ok.” Lucas says and he gets up from the bed. He looks for his glasses first. He plucks them off the night table and begins to look for his clothes. Will looks at his knifelike vertebrae jutting out beneath his with mild horror with mild horror as he bends. He is going to feed Lucas a lot.

“I have a bathrobe hanging on the door. You can just take it. It’s a little big on me.” Says Will and Lucas seems touched momentarily by the intimacy of this. He eyes Will with a small smile as he slips on the robe. It’s slightly short in the arms, but otherwise serviceable. Will watches as goes, hears the dogs stir a little with his passing. He lays back and sighs.

Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

A commission for someone who has chosen to remain anonymous. Contact me @ writtenbyizzy@gmail.com for information on commissions. This fic generally updates Wednesdays, but I am traveling for the holidays so posts will resume mid-January. Thanks for reading!

When Lucas returns with two take away boxes of food and a cup of water Will catches the scent of those cajun spices and his stomach growls.

“Was that you?” Lucas asks, incredulous and Will nods.

“I’m a growing boy.” He says and hears Lucas’s breath catch. He files that one away for later and pats the bed beside him. Lucas sits beside him, still in his bathrobe. Lucas settles in beside him and opens the boxes. He hands Will his shrimp and grits and opens his own virtually untouched blackened catfish poboy.

“Oh! I should have gotten you a fork.” Lucas says and Will shrugs.

“I don’t mind.” He says and pops a cold shrimp back into his mouth. He holds one out to Lucas who takes it in his teeth from between his fingers. Will watches closely as he chews, feeling oddly relieved as he swallows it.

“It’s good.” Says Lucas and Will beams back him.

“Now, try the poboy.” Says Will and Lucas picks it up gingerly, trying to hold it so that none of it falls onto the bed. “Don’t worry about it, I’m probably gonna have to burn these damn sheets anyway.”

Lucas takes a quick bite. Will watches as he chews and swallows.

“That’s really good.” Lucas says with genuine delight and Will fights the urge to clap as he takes another, more careless bite.

“Tuck in then.” Will says as they settle on their respective plates, occasionally passing bits of food to each other, their feet, ankles, and legs steadily entwining until Will ends up in Lucas’s lap. He catches whatever bits fall out of the sandwich and feed them to Lucas. His cock twitches as Lucas licks remoulade from between his fingers, tongue swirling around the pad of his finger. Heat burns low between them, the telling spark.

“Do you know what I just...think?” Asks Lucas and Will takes a second to delight in the fact that English is no longer coming so easily to this man who deals with language for a living.

“What?” Asks Will, faux-innocent and wholly knowing as he slides a hand in the slight gap between the split in his bathrobe, spreading it wide so his fingers can play in Lucas’s chest hair.

“I have been selfish tonight.” Says Lucas. He caresses Will’s chest in turn, he slowly begins to slide down, delighting in the soft plains of his naked skin. He watches as a flush blooms in Will’s cheeks and chases his own much darker hand down his chest. He thumbs one of Will’s nipples and the man shifts in his lap, seeking more friction.

“Are they sensitive?” Lucas asks and Will nods as he presses a kiss to the older man’s jaw. He leans back and bares his throat as Lucas plays with his nipples, pulling and pinching at the flat little nubs until they pebble beneath the onslaught. He presses soft kisses against Will’s neck, bites and licks his ears, explores him thoroughly with his mouth. He feels Will start to harden and strokes him, using his own precum to give him a slick glide.

“Is that ok?” Asks Lucas as he teases a hard little nipple with one hand and strokes with the other.

“A little tighter.” Will says, and lets out a high pitched wail as the large hand tightens around his cock. Lucas milks his orgasm from him in record time, Will is already keyed up and panting and leaking and shaking as Lucas bends down to worry his nipple with his teeth. His other hand wraps around Will to grab a handful of his ass, fingers teasingly close to his hole.

“You can touch it!” Will whines, borderline hysterical as he pants and writhes. “Please.”

It is as Lucas ghosts a finger around his rim, teasing and teasing, his puckered hole fluttering around the hesitant digit, begging more, that Will feels a low pulsing in his balls. He’s close.

“Inside me Lucas!” He demands and Lucas barely gets that single finger in past the first knuckle before Will is coming with a shout, his orgasm spilling hot between their bodies.

When he kisses Lucas it’s passionate, consuming, and full of heat and affection. Lucas sinks the hand that is not trapped between them into his hair.

Their kiss peters off in a string of tiny kisses. Their mouths and bodies grow lax and languid.

“I should clean us up.” Will says through a yawn as he unentangles himself from Lucas. He reaches over to the nightstand for some tissues and starts on himself, and when he leans over to wipe up Lucas finds that the older man is already asleep.

Will gingerly cleans him before turning off the light and curling up beside him.

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